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16. FIRST RECORD OF THE SUNFISH *RANZANIA LAEVIS* (PENNANT)
(PISCES : OSTEICHTHYES : PERCIFORMES : MOLIDAE)
FROM THE WEST BENGAL COAST

A juvenile *Ranzania laevis* (Pennant) was caught in a trawl net on November 28, 1998, approximately 2 km offshore from Sankarpur harbour at Medinipur (= Midnapore) coast of West Bengal (21° 36' N, 87° 30' E) in the Bay of Bengal. The specimen (Regn No. MARC/ZSI/87) measured 494 mm in standard length. Depth of body 50.8%, head 37.65% in standard length, diameter of eye 15.05% in head length. Mouth aperture wide, measured 24 mm (vertical) and 13 mm (horizontal). Fin formula D.16, A.16, P.13, C.21, Pelvic fins absent.

Fraser-Brunner (1951) has reported its occurrence in all seas except polar seas. At the same time, he stated that the species is rather rare and its occurrence unpredictable. The sunfish (*R. laevis*) is distributed in tropical and subtropical waters of the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans (Nelson 1984). Chhapgar (1964) reported *Ranzania truncata* (Retzius) from the Mumbai (formerly Bombay) coast. In 1776, Pennant first described the sunfish as *Ostracion laevis*, and in 1785, Retzius described the

sunfish as *Tetraodon truncatus* (op. cit. Fraser-Brunner 1951). Further, in 1798 Pennant described a specimen from Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) as *Balistes truncatus* (op. cit. Deraniyagala 1944). However, all the species were further synonymised as *Ranzania laevis* (op. cit. Fraser-Brunner 1951). Fraser-Brunner (1951) and Fischer and Bianchi (1984) stated that *laevis* is the only species under the genus *Ranzania*. Hence, the specimen described as *R. truncatus* (Retzius) by Chhapgar (1964) is the same species as *R. laevis*. Three more specimens of *R. laevis* were captured from the west coast of Sri Lanka (op. cit. Deraniyagala 1944). They were reported in 1798, 1911 and 1941 by Pennant, Pearson and Deraniyagala respectively, of which one was recorded from Katys harbour which is nearer the Indian coast. Scott (1983) in FAO species identification sheets (op. cit. Fischer and Bianchi 1984) mentioned the occurrence of the species only in fishing areas 34 and 51. Talwar *et al.* (1992) did not mention its occurrence from the coastal waters of West Bengal.

Hence, this is the first occurrence of *R. laevis* not only from coastal West Bengal, but from the entire east coast of India.

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17. FISHES OF CHIMMONY AND PEECHI-VAZHANI WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES, KERALA, INDIA

(With one text-figure)

The Western Ghats immediately south of the Palghat gap are topographically complex and among the most heterogeneous areas in the entire Western Ghats with regard to bio-climatic zones, forest vegetation and endemic species (Nair 1991). Only by taking into consideration the complex topography of Parambikulam, Peechi-Vazhani and Chimmony Wildlife Sanctuaries in Kerala with the adjacent Anamalai Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu can the full potential of this tract be realized. The fish fauna of Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary was reported by Biju *et al.* (1999). So far, nobody had studied the Peechi-Vazhani and Chimmony Wildlife Sanctuaries. The present survey indicates the diversity of the fish fauna in these Sanctuaries.

Chimmony Wildlife Sanctuary: The Chimmony Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in

Mukundapuram taluka in Thrissur district (10° 22'-10° 29' N and 76° 25'-76° 34' E). This Sanctuary is a stretch of forest comprising of mainly evergreen forests, moist teak forests and moist mixed deciduous forests. The Chimmony Sanctuary, along the southwestern flanks of the Nelliampathies contiguous with and further south of Peechi extending east to Parambikulam, was declared as a Wildlife Sanctuary in August 1984. The Sanctuary area ranges in altitude from 50 to 1,116 m above msl (Nair 1991). The Chimmony Sanctuary is separated from the Parambikulam Sanctuary to its east by a stretch of forest along the catchment area of Kannankuzhithodu in Kodassery Reserve Forest.

Peechi-Vazhani Wildlife Sanctuary: The Peechi-Vazhani Sanctuary lies in Thrissur and Thalappilly talukas of Thrissur district (10° 28'-10° 40' N and 76° 17'-76° 29' E) (Nair 1991).